

[543.]

Any individual, partnership, association, corporation, municipal corporation or state or any political subdivision thereof engaged in or preparing to engage in the manufacture, transportation or storage of any product to be used in the preparation of the United States or any of the states for defense or for war or in the prosecution of war by the United States, or by any country with which the United States shall then maintain friendly relations, or in the manufacture, transportation, distribution or storage of gas, oil, coal, electricity or water, or any of said natural or artificial persons operating any public utility, who has property so used which he or it believes will be endangered if public use and travel is not restricted or prohibited on one or more highways or parts thereof upon which such property abuts, may petition the highway commissioners of the state or of any city, town or county to close one or more of said highways or parts thereof to public use and travel or to restrict by order the use and travel upon one or more of said highways or parts thereof.

Upon receipt of such petition, the highway commissioners shall set a day for hearing and give notice thereof by publication in a newspaper having general circulation in the city, town or county in which such property is located, such notice to be at least seven (7) days prior to the date set for hearing. If after hearing the highway commissioners determine that the public safety and the safety of the property of the petitioner so require, they shall by suitable order close to public use and travel or reasonably restrict the use of and travel upon one or more of said highways or parts thereof; provided, the highway commissioners may issue written permits to travel over the highways so closed or restricted to responsible and reputable persons for such term, under such conditions and in such form as said commissioners may prescribe. Appropriate notices in letters at least three (3) inches high shall be posted conspicuously at each end of any highway so closed or restricted by such order. The highway commissioners may at any time revoke or modify any order so made.]

[544.]

Whoever violates any order made under § 543 shall, upon conviction, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and be punished by imprisonment for not more than ten (10) days, or a fine of not more than fifty dollars (\$50.00), or both.]

[545.]

Nothing in this subtitle shall be construed to impair, curtail or destroy the rights of employees and their representatives to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, to strike, to picket, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.]

[546.]

If any provision of this subtitle or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or